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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 RIYADH 000286

SIPDIS

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DEPT FOR NEA/EX, NEA/ARP, S/CT, DS/IP/NEA, DS/ITA, D, P, M,
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SUBJECT: RIYADH EAC - 17 FEBRUARY 2008

REF: A. 07 RIYADH 00138
     ¶B. 07 RIYADH 01367
     ¶C. 07 STATE 152805
     ¶D. 12 FAH-6 H-411
     ¶E. 12 FAH-6 H-112
     ¶F. STATE 15668

Classified By: Ambassador Ford Fraker for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (S) BEGIN SUMMARY: On Sunday, February 17, the
Ambassador convened a regularly scheduled Emergency Action
Committee (EAC) meeting to review the Embassy's security
posture and to review existing reverse tripwires for the
return of adult family members. BPM and RSO reported no new
specific and/or credible threats to the Mission and members
agreed that the Embassy's existing security posture remains
appropriate to the current security environment. Members
noted that the majority of the established tripwires for the
return of EFM,s had been met, necessitating a review of
current guidelines and several recommendations for
modification. The threat condition level for Embassy Riyadh
has been downgraded from Charlie Plus to Charlie and post
will submit a request via septel for the immediate expansion
of the current adult-only family visitation to the KSA to
include all family members. Present were the DCM, the Consul
General from Jeddah, POL, ECON, PA, CONS, BPM, LEGAT, DHS,
FCS, MSG, DAO, CLO, MGT, and RSO. END SUMMARY.

SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

¶2. (S) EAC members reviewed the current security environment
in the KSA and reported no new specific and/or credible
threat information. Members again discussed recent threat
assessments suggesting there had been an increase in
reporting being generated from the KSA in recent weeks, to
include potential threat reporting directed against U.S.
diplomatic and western interests throughout the Kingdom.
However, it was the consensus of the EAC that the overall
security environment in the country had improved steadily
over the last year.

¶3. (S) Following the peak of terrorism in 2003 and 2004,
aggressive Saudi counter-terror measures have taken a toll
against the personnel and planning capabilities of extremist
groups. EAC members understand that despite these
counterterrorism successes and the potentially degraded
capabilities of organized groups to operate, attacks against
Western interests and citizens in the KSA will remain a major
concern. Attacks in the last couple of years (02/06 Abqaiq
attack, the 02/07 killings of four French nationals north of
Medina and the 02/07 killing of a Mabahith Colonel) serve as
explicit reminders of the latent hostility within the region.
 That said, the overall consensus from the EAC was that Saudi

security agencies continue their efforts to counter extremism
aggressively and appropriate security measures have been
taken to address this continued threat. While one can debate
the actual level of improvement within KSA,s overall
security environment, it was agreed that several of the
established reverse tripwires for the return of adult family
members have in fact been met and warranted a review of
current security guidelines.

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REVERSE TRIPWIRES FOR RETURN OF FAMILY MEMBERS
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¶4. (S) Per ref A, the EAC voted unanimously to approve twelve
reverse tripwires for the return of adult family members to
the KSA, one of which is mandatory. These tripwires were
last reviewed at a regularly scheduled EAC meeting and
reported in ref B. Members reviewed the tripwires and
provided the following update:

a) MANDATORY TRIPWIRE - The Regional Security Office (RSO)
and Post Management have the capability to provide adequate
security support for additional family members.

POST COMMENT - DS has agreed that the Regional Security
Offices in the KSA are woefully understaffed and in need of
additional personnel. Embassy Riyadh has requested one
additional Assistant Regional Security Officer (ARSO)
position for Riyadh and supported Consulate Jeddah,s request
for one additional ARSO as well. These positions were
proposed in the DS RSO staffing needs matrix for FY07 and
will be incorporated into the Mission Strategic Plan (MSP).
The Department has advised Post that Riyadh and Jeddah are
on-line to receive one additional ARSO position in support of

growing operations once funding becomes available. There are
currently no other Management staffing issues in Riyadh
related to the return of adult family members to post.

AT LEAST SIX OF THE FOLLOWING TRIPWIRES MUST BE MET:

b) TRIPWIRE - Security around the U.S. Embassy and Consulates
is sufficient in terms of USG-funded local guards, KSA
security personnel, physical and procedural security.

POST COMMENT - Members agreed that the level of security
support being provided to the diplomatic missions in Riyadh,
Jeddah and Dhahran is adequate. Post believes we have met
this requirement.

c) TRIPWIRE - KSA and USG intelligence agencies are able to
liaise effectively to discern, address, investigate and
counter ongoing threats.

POST COMMENT - Following a briefing by BPM, EAC members
agreed that the level of liaison and cooperation between the
KSA and the USG are good. Post believes we have met this
requirement.

d) TRIPWIRE - Senior-level Saudi officials support Embassy
security with operational follow-through.

POST COMMENT - Over the last year, host government
authorities have consistently addressed concerns related to
security at all our diplomatic facilities. Post believes we
have met this requirement.

e) TRIPWIRE - The Saudi Arabian government has publicly
tried, convicted, and punished terrorists as an indication of
the government,s self-confidence and its publicly stated
commitment to anti-terrorism.

POST COMMENT - As noted in previous reporting traffic, the
consensus was the host government was moving in the right
direction. Arrests are being made and it was suggested that

trials are in fact being conducted. Post will follow-up to identify the status of the trials.

f) TRIPWIRE - Radical elements encounter an increasingly difficult operational environment; logistical and financial support to terrorists is stymied, and radical elements are increasingly captured, killed or otherwise neutralized.

POST COMMENT - EAC members agreed there have been significant efforts to counter radical elements and to rally public support against terrorism. Post believes we have met this requirement.

g) TRIPWIRE - The situation on the ground allows the EAC to vote to downgrade post threat-con condition from Charlie Plus to Charlie; post subsequently operates at Charlie threat condition for a period of one year.

POST COMMENT - The RSO provided members with an updated chart which further explained the use of individual threat conditions as established independently by Post. With the exception of the recent threat stream for Consulate Jeddah that warranted a request to maintain DS MTT personnel in-country, it was the consensus of the EAC that the KSA had been operating in a so-called CHARLIE threat level environment for some time. It was further understood that it would not be unusual to elevate individual posts to CHARLIE PLUS for short periods of time throughout the year as a precautionary measure in response to the receipt of threat information. Post believes we have met this requirement and have moved our current threat condition level to Charlie.

h) TRIPWIRE - There has been no pattern of mosque sermons, media content or public demonstrations calling for anti-American action in the KSA for at least six months.

POST COMMENT - Post believes we have met this requirement.

i) TRIPWIRE - The regional security situation has not deteriorated significantly over the past six months.

POST COMMENT - While we continue to have concerns throughout the region, the situation in Iraq has improved and there has been no significant deterioration of the overall security environment. Post believes we have met this requirement.

j) TRIPWIRE - The Saudi government demonstrates increased confidence in its internal security situation, as evidenced by a reduction in the level of security at the entrances to

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the Diplomatic Quarter (DQ) or western compound or checkpoints on the road to the airports or at the airport.

POST COMMENT - The presence of security personnel providing coverage to a compound housing the majority of diplomatic missions is a fact of life in today,s environment. Host government security personnel have routinely elevated and reduced their presence both on the DQ and throughout Riyadh and the KSA as deemed necessary. In Dhahran, some streets previously closed for security reasons have been reopened. Post believes we have met this requirement.

k) TRIPWIRE - There have not been repeated, violent clashes between Saudi security forces and terrorists for 12 months or attacks against the civilian population for 18 months.

POST COMMENT - Post believes we have met this requirement.

l) TRIPWIRE - Specific to Consulate General Jeddah: Closure of Palestine Street or the opening of a new Consulate at a more secure location.

POST COMMENT - N/A

FAMILY VISITATION POLICY - REQUEST TO EXPAND

¶5. (SBU) The ongoing program allowing visits by adult family
members, which began in November 2007, has been a success
with no adverse affects on Mission programs. As a result,
and pursuant to post,s continuing efforts to review the
threat environment related to the return of adult family
members, Post will recommend via septel that the Department
authorize the immediate expansion of this program to include
all family members. Post will continue to review the
security environment in the KSA and pursue increased staffing
levels as deemed appropriate. This may include the
recommendation that the Department review the return of adult
family members to one or all of the posts in Mission Saudi
Arabia during the summer 2008 summer transfer cycle.

RESIDENTIAL SECURITY UPGRADES

¶6. (SBU) As a follow-up to last months EAC, the RSO briefed
members on the status of residential security upgrade
programs in Riyadh. This included a review of current State
Department standards and threat levels (refs C, D and E) and
a discussion as to which programs needed to be maintained.
The recent program to establish residential safehavens in all
U.S. government owned and several leased properties has been
completed. Part of this program included the installation of
metal sheeting within individual safehavens of government
owned properties. It was the consensus of the EAC that given
the current environment post would no longer require the
installation of metal sheeting in properties on the
Diplomatic Quarter in Riyadh. The RSO was tasked with
completing new surveys for all properties to ensure that
standards are being met related to our current threat levels.
 It was also recommended that residential security upgrades
of off-compound housing in both Jeddah and Dhahran be
prioritized.

¶7. (S) Per ref f, the EAC then discussed the recent death of
Imad Mughniyah, a top Hizballah terrorist, in Damascus,
Syria. Members agreed that while there is a likelihood of a
response by Hizballah, we are less likely to see an event in
the KSA and feel no warden message is necessary at this time.

¶8. (U) Finally, all staff were reminded to exercise caution
in their daily routines and to immediately report any
suspicious behavior or event to the RSO.
FRAKER